



## The Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council selects Johnny Naize as new speaker

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** -- Today, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council convened for the first time as a 24-member body at the 2011 Winter Session, with its first order of business being the selection of the speaker. Honorable Johnny Naize won the speakership and will be the Speaker of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council for the next two years. He won the speakership on a majority vote of 15-9.

The session began with the sponsorship of Legislation No. 0773-11 by Honorable Joshua Lavar Butler, which the Council approved on a vote of 21-2. Mr. Butler's legislation changed the current speaker selection process to a nomination procedure, and was strengthened with several amendments. The newly adopted process allows for the nominations of the speaker to occur on the Council floor, and also allows for a transparent process for the election of the speaker.

"The old process only benefits a couple of people. This new process resembles how our war chiefs used to nominate a speaker," said Mr. Butler. "We are incorporating traditional concepts and the Navajo people want progressive movement forward. Let's make this process our new process."



Speaker Johnny Naize holds the speaker gavel, which will use for the next two years as the Speaker of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council (Photo by Laphillda Tso).

Following passage of the legislation, Speaker Pro Tem Jonathan Nez opened the nomination process. Five Council delegates accepted nominations: LoRenzo Bates, Elmer Begay, Nelson Begaye, Russell Begaye, and Johnny Naize. Delegate Leonard Tsosie was nominated, but declined to accept the nomination stating that his constituents wanted his voice to remain on the Council floor. The Navajo Election Administration and Navajo Election Supervisors administered the voting and provided each delegate a ballot with the five nominees. The first round of votes were as follows: Naize, 11 votes; Bates, 8 votes; E. Begay, 1 vote; N. Begaye, 3 votes, and R. Begaye, 1 vote. According to the Navajo Nation Code, if a nominee does not receive at least a two-thirds vote or 16 votes in this case, a vote-off will occur. As a result, both Naize and Bates advanced to a run-off election, and were given a maximum of five minutes to reiterate their platform. After their presentations, the vote occurred with Naize winning 15 votes, and Bates winning nine votes. Honorable Judge TJ Holgate swore in Mr. Naize as the new speaker.

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"I would like to thank Mr. Bates for his leadership. He is a very intelligent, articulate person. I will always rely on his expertise," said Speaker Naize, whose platform includes rehabilitating the Former Bennett Freeze Area. "And to the 24, I thank you. We will work together the next two years. I will rely heavily on the staff to help achieve our goals and objectives during my speakership."

Speaker Naize is currently starting his fourth term as a Navajo legislator. His educational background includes a bachelor's degree in surveying from Northern Arizona University. He has held previous employment with Peabody Coal Company, Navajo Division of Community Development and Navajo Tribal Utility Authority. He also served as chair for the Transportation and Community Development Committee with the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council. He was nominated by Honorable David Tom.

Following the swearing in of the speaker, President Ben Shelly gave his 2011 State of the Nation address. Shelly highlighted several areas of focus, including revamping the SAS executive review process, creating an executive energy committee, building a network of technology on the Navajo Nation and working in unity with the 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council and Navajo Judicial Branch for the benefit of the Navajo people.

Shelly also acknowledged the 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council for their restructuring efforts this past week in preparation for the winter session.

"It is promising and very encouraging to me to hope for a new foundation of cooperation within our government," said President Shelly.

Several delegates thanked President Shelly for his report, and also shared the vision they have from their respective areas they represent, as well as expressing the need to work with the president.

Earlier today, the Council convened for a special session to adopt Mr. Butler's legislation but voted 13-9 against adopting the special session agenda due to legality issues. Instead, the Council decided to make the adoption of the legislation part of the winter session agenda.

The Council recessed at 7:30 p.m. and will continue its business with the proposed adoption of Council floor rules and a legislation to be sponsored by Mr. Tsosie

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